

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A combination of a foaming agent and a molten metal used for manufacturing a foamed or porous metal, comprising: a mixture of a foamable powder; and a coating layer of  $\text{SiO}_2$  covering the particle surfaces of the powder; and a molten metal.

2. (Currently Amended) The combination ~~foaming—agent~~ according to claim 1, wherein the powder is of a carbonate.

3. (Currently Amended) The combination ~~foaming—agent~~ according to claim 1, wherein the carbonate is  $\text{CaCO}_3$  or  $\text{MgCO}_3$ .

4. (New) The combination according to claim 1, wherein the carbonate is  $\text{MgCO}_3$ .

5. (New) The combination according to claim 1, wherein the molten metal is molten aluminum.

6. (New) A foaming agent used for manufacturing a foamed or porous metal, comprising: a foamable powder of  $\text{MgCO}_3$ ; and a coating layer of  $\text{SiO}_2$  covering the particle surfaces of the powder.